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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, GUATEMALA — DESP. NO. 776

TO DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON — DATE March 12, 1954

REF

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PER Platt — OFFICE ARA

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	RECD 3/14	IN / FROM / OTHER	DC/R-2 ARA-2 S/S-2 3-16-54 army-35 navy-39 air-27 OSD-1 USIA-2

SUBJECT: Weeka No. 10 for State, Army and Air Departments, from U.S. Political Officer Stuart

Name of Officer

SUMMARY

The Caracas Conference debate on the United States' anti-Communist resolution virtually monopolized Guatemala's attention this week, and Guatemalans who are concerned about Communist influence on their government appeared somewhat heartened by the reports that the U.S. Secretary of State was taking a vigorous personal interest in the Communist problem in the hemisphere. The independent, anti-Communist newspapers which have the great majority of the circulation here, came out in favor of the U.S. draft anti-Communist resolution and criticized the Conference tactics of Guatemala's Foreign Minister Guillermo TORIELLO. The Communist and other Administration papers portrayed Toriello as a David slaying the "interventionist" Goliath represented by the Secretary, and Communist-inspired "anti-interventionist" meetings continued to be held in provincial towns, but this line seemed to suffer from inability to point any clear-cut U.S. interventionist act at Caracas. Despite these developments, however, anti-Communists here were heard to express privately the belief that the cruel dilemma of Guatemala was that a choice must be made between U.S. intervention or Communist triumph and that this problem was not being faced up to at Caracas.

That President Arbenz was still defiant on the Communist issue was indicated by the fact that his wife sent a public letter of greeting to an "International Women's Day" meeting sponsored by the local affiliate of the Communist-front World Federation of Democratic Women.

The disintegration of the "non-Communist" revolutionary forces continued with the expulsion from the PAR of two more deputies and the suspension of five others for participating in an insurrection against the party leadership during the election of the 1953-54 presiding officers of Congress.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Interest Centered in Caracas Conference: The Guatemalan press this week headlined the clash at Caracas between Secretary Dulles

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REPORTER

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and Foreign Minister Toriello over the U.S.' anti-Communist resolution and news columns gave more foreign news coverage to this topic than to any other in recent times. The independent newspapers, with evident relief that the U.S. had not adopted an "interventionist" position, felt free to comment favorably on the U.S. draft resolution. El Imparcial and El Espectador praised it in broad terms while Prensa Libre stated that it was "more moderate" than expected and would have no immediate application to Guatemala unless the Communists tried to seize power openly. They also devoted considerable editorial space to criticizing Toriello's performance. The only independent papers to comment critically were those edited by the irrascible Clemente MARROQUIN Rojas, who spent the week impartially castigating the U.S. delegation for alleged weakness and the Guatemalan delegation for stupidity.

The Administration newspapers carried vitriolic front page material attacking the U.S. and claiming that Latin America backed Guatemala against U.S. attempts at intervention. Nuestro Diario, which is clandestinely government subsidized, accused Secretary Dulles of "lying and distortion" while the Communist Tribuna Popular claimed that he was advocating "unrestricted freedom for monopolistic capital and jail for the people." They had high praise for Toriello, whom they pictured as a dauntless hero of the oppressed, and published congratulatory telegrams sent to him by various left-wing political and labor organizations. The government-owned Diario de Centro America has not been published for the past three weeks allegedly because of a newsprint shortage and so did not comment.

Communist-inspired "anti-intervention" meetings continued to be held this week in provincial towns. One in San Juan Sacatepéquez was addressed by Victor Manuel GUTIERREZ, Communist Secretary General of the national labor federation, CGTG, and another in Quezaltenango by Bernardo ALVARADO Monzón, the party's organization secretary.

Despite the interest aroused by the U.S. resolution and Secretary Dulles' speeches, many anti-Communists remain pessimistic about the long-range results of the Caracas Conference. Such people had previously reasoned that the U.S. had put the anti-Communist resolution on the Conference agenda last November, that this was obviously aimed at Guatemala, and that therefore the U.S. intended to do something concrete about eliminating Communist influences here. Now they are disillusioned that the Caracas Conference has not specifically indicted the present Guatemalan Government and proposed definite measures to throw the Communists out. The realization is only slowly dawning that an inter-American conference is scarcely likely to take such action.

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DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

First Lady Greets Communist-Front Meeting: Sra. de Arbenz sent a letter of greeting to a local meeting on March 8 to celebrate the "International Women's Day" sponsored by the World Federation of Democratic Women (WFDW), the world-wide Communist-front organization with headquarters in East Berlin. The First Lady expressed regrets that she could not attend and exhorted Guatemala's women to support the revolutionary program and reject the intervention of foreign interests. The principal speaker at the meeting was Dora FRANCO y Franco, Secretary General of the Alianza Femenina Guatemalteca (AFG), the local affiliate of the WFDW of which Sra. de Arbenz is a founding member. Srta Franco, who has traveled the length of the Soviet orbit, is almost certainly a Communist party member.

More Dissension in the Revolutionary Parties: Following the revolt of a number of Administration deputies against the "National Democratic Front's" slate of candidates for officers of Congress last week (Weeka 9) the Disciplinary Committee of the Partido Acción Revolucionaria (PAR) on March 6 adopted a resolution expelling deputies Mario DIAZ Morales and Salvador CHICAS Carrillo from the party for their part in the revolt, and suspending five other deputies for three months on the same ground. This year the PAR, largest of the Administration parties, has expelled a total of five of its 25 deputies and suspended five others. This breach in the party ranks is part of the progressive disintegration of the "non-Communist" Administration parties which have largely lost any ideological orientation and are satisfied to follow the Communist lead while bickering among themselves over the political spoils.

National Agrarian Department Announces Intent to End Illegal Land Seizures: The National Agrarian Department this week announced to the press that the Department would henceforth apply the Agrarian Law strictly and that action would be taken against any Local Agrarian Committees which participated in the seizure of private land not affected by the law. It was also said that several Local Agrarian Committees from the troubled Department of Escuintla would be summoned so that the policy could be explained to them.

The announcement was made in the name of the Department Chief, Major Alfonso MARTINEZ, who is currently absent on a trip to Mexico. He has on numerous occasions in the past asserted that he would apply the Agrarian Law "strictly" and it remains to be seen whether this week's announcement will have any effect in curbing the Communist-inspired illegal seizures of land such as have occurred in Escuintla since early December. Last year when the planting season got underway in March there was a marked decrease in such agrarian disturbances.

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F790005-0798 PSYCHOLOGICAL

Guatemalan Newsmen Barred From Caracas: Three anti-Government Guatemalan newsmen have been denied visas to enter Venezuela to cover the Caracas Conference and their cases have been publicized here as a warning that all Guatemalans and not just Communists and pro-Communists may expect to be treated with suspicion abroad. The three were Francisco MENDEZ, Editor-in-Chief of the independent, anti-Communist El Imparcial; Raúl GONZALEZ, El Imparcial photographer commissioned to cover the Conference for Time, Inc., of New York; and Oscar CONDE, Director of the anti-Communist "Radio Cisneros" radio program who finally succeeded in leaving the country after difficulties with authorities (Weeka 9). Since Guatemala and Venezuela do not maintain diplomatic or consular relations, they had proceeded to Panama to pick up Venezuelan visas there, but the Venezuelan Consul refused to issue them without special instructions from Caracas. After a vain attempt to obtain such instructions, the newsmen were forced to give up.

The case was publicized in El Imparcial and Impacto which warned editorially that Guatemalans traveling abroad could expect to be treated with suspicion and shadowed even in their "amatory escapades" whether or not they had Communist connections. In private conversations, a number of conservative, anti-Government Guatemalans returning to this country in the past few months have complained that they are treated as suspected Reds by people with whom they come in contact, especially in the United States.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR:

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cc: C.A. Missions & Routine
USDEL, Caracas

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